

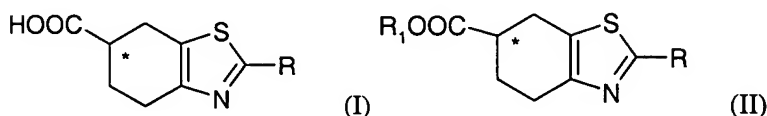
Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

1-17 (Cancelled)

18. (New) A compound of formula (I) or of formula (II), as a single (R) or (S) enantiomer, or a salt thereof,



wherein R is a protected amino group; R₁ is straight or branched C₁-C₆ alkyl optionally substituted by phenyl; and the asterisk * indicates the stereogenic carbon atom; or a compound of formula (II), as a mixture of (R,S) enantiomers, or a salt thereof, wherein, R and the asterisk * being as defined above, R₁ is straight or branched C₁-C₆ alkyl substituted by phenyl.

19. (New) A compound as racemic (R,S) mixture, or a salt thereof, which is selected from:

- 2-acetylamino-4,5,6,7-tetrahydro-benzothiazole-6-carboxylic acid;
- 2-propionylamino-4,5,6,7-tetrahydro-benzothiazole-6-carboxylic acid;
- 2-acetylamino-4,5,6,7-tetrahydro-benzothiazole-6-carboxylic acid methyl ester;
- 2-acetylamino-4,5,6,7-tetrahydro-benzothiazole-6-carboxylic acid ethyl ester;

- 2-acetylamino-4,5,6,7-tetrahydro-benzothiazole-6-carboxylic acid propyl ester;
- 2-propionylamino-4,5,6,7-tetrahydro-benzothiazole-6-carboxylic acid methyl ester;
- 2-propionylamino-4,5,6,7-tetrahydro-benzothiazole-6-carboxylic acid ethyl ester; and
- 2-propionylamino-4,5,6,7-tetrahydro-benzothiazole-6-carboxylic acid propyl ester.

20. (New) A compound of formula (I) or formula (II), or a salt thereof, according to claim 18, wherein the R group is a protected amino group in the form of an acylamino, carbamoyl, arylmethylamino, phthalimido or silylamino group.

21. (New) A compound of formula (I) or formula (II), or a salt thereof, according to claim 18, as the single (S) enantiomer.

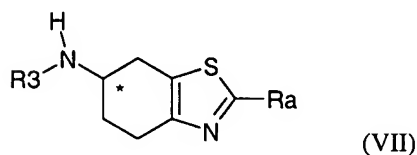
22. (New) A compound of formula (I) or a salt thereof, according to claim 18, which is:

- (S)-2-acetylamino-4,5,6,7-tetrahydro-benzothiazole-6-carboxylic acid;
- (S)-2-propionylamino-4,5,6,7-tetrahydro-benzothiazole-6-carboxylic acid;
- (R)-2-acetylamino-4,5,6,7-tetrahydro-benzothiazole-6-carboxylic acid; or
- (R)-2-propionylamino-4,5,6,7-tetrahydro-benzothiazole-6-carboxylic acid.

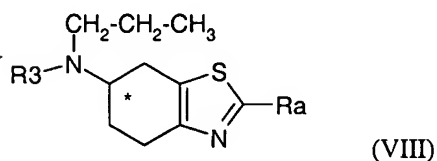
23. (New) A compound according to claim 18, with enantiomeric purity of at least 96%.

24. (New) The use of a compound of formula (I), or a salt thereof, as defined in claim 18, for the preparation of pramipexole or of a pharmaceutically acceptable salt thereof.

25. (New) The use according to claim 24, comprising the alkylation of a compound of formula (VII) as the single (S) enantiomer



wherein R_a is a free or protected amino group, R_3 is hydrogen or a R_4 -O-CO- group, wherein R_4 is straight or branched C_1 - C_4 alkyl and the asterisk * indicates the stereogenic carbon atom, to obtain a compound of formula (VIII)

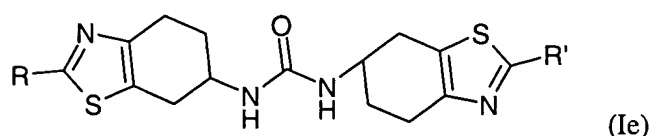


wherein R_a , R_3 and the asterisk * are as defined above, and, if necessary, the removal of the primary amino-protecting group and/or of the R_4 -O-CO- group from the secondary amino group and, if desired, its conversion to a pharmaceutically acceptable salt thereof, characterized in that:

a) a compound of formula (VII), wherein R_a is a protected amino group and R_3 is as defined above, as the single (S) enantiomer, is prepared by rearrangement of a compound of formula (I), as the single (S) enantiomer, *via* formation of isocyanate, and subsequent addition of a nucleophilic

solvent or subsequent quenching in water in the presence of an acidic agent; or

b) a compound of formula (VII), wherein R_a is a free amino group and R_3 is hydrogen, as the single (S) enantiomer, is prepared by rearrangement of a compound of formula (I), as the single (S) enantiomer, *via* formation of isocyanate, and subsequent addition of water, to obtain a compound of formula (Ie)

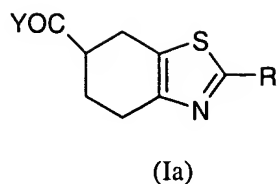


wherein R' has the same meaning as R defined above, and subsequent hydrolysis.

26. (New) The use according to claim 25, variant a), wherein quenching in water in the presence of an acidic agent affords a compound of formula (VII), as defined in claim 25, wherein R_3 is hydrogen.

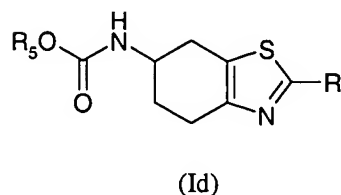
27. (New) The use according to claim 25, variant a), wherein the nucleophilic solvent is a C_1 - C_4 alkanol, to obtain a compound of formula (VII), as defined in claim 25, wherein R_3 is a R_4 -O-CO- group, wherein R_4 is as defined in claim 25.

28. (New) The use according to claim 25, variant a), wherein the rearrangement reaction is carried out according to Curtius in a nucleophilic solvent, via formation of a compound of formula of formula (Ia)



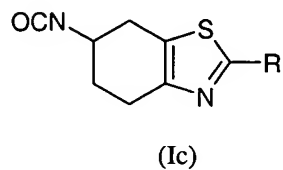
in which Y is N₃

and of a compound of formula (Id)



wherein R₅ is a straight or branched C₁-C₄ alkyl group, without recovery of the intermediates.

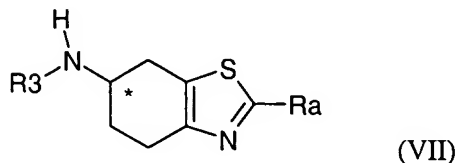
29. (New) The use according to claim 25, wherein the rearrangement takes place via formation of a isocyanate of formula (Ic)



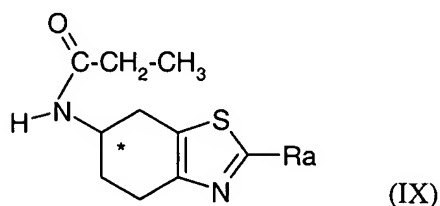
in which R is a protected amino group, and subsequent addition of a nucleophilic solvent or subsequent quenching in water in the presence of an acidic agent.

30. (New) A process for the preparation of pramipexole, or a pharmaceutically acceptable salt thereof, comprising the acylation of a

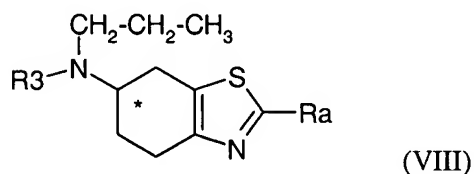
compound of formula (VII), either as the single (S) enantiomer or as mixture of (R,S) enantiomers



wherein R_3 is hydrogen and R_a is a free or protected amino group, by reaction with propionic anhydride, and subsequent reduction of the resulting compound of formula (IX)



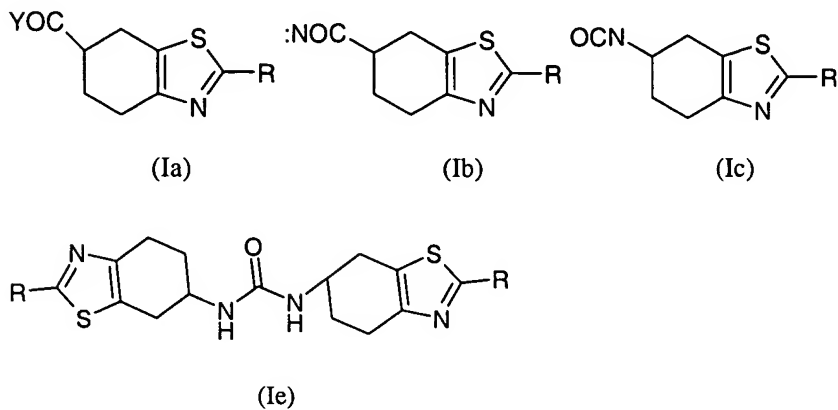
wherein R_a is as defined above, by treatment with an alkali metal borohydride and molecular iodine, to obtain a compound of formula (VIII)



wherein R_3 is hydrogen and R_a is as defined above; followed, if necessary, by deprotection of the primary amino group and/or by resolution of the mixture of (R,S) enantiomers into the single (S) enantiomer and, if desired, by conversion of pramipexole to a pharmaceutically acceptable salt thereof.

31. (New) A process according to claim 30, wherein the alkali metal borohydride is NaBH_4 in amounts of 1-5 mols per mole of compound of formula (IX) and the amount of iodine is 0.5-3 mols per mole of compound of formula (IX).

32. (New) A compound of formula (Ia), (Ib), (Ic) or (Ie), either as mixture of (R,S) enantiomers or as a single (R) or (S) enantiomer



wherein Y is NHOCOR_4 , N_3 or NH_2 , in which R_4 is straight or branched C_1 - C_4 alkyl and R is a protected amino group.